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Commission on the Status of Women

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Item 3 (c) (i) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and actions in the critical areas of concern and further action and initiatives: the role of men and boys in gender equality

Statement submitted by Federation of Cuban Women, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2004/1.



The role of men and boys in the achievement of gender equality should imply an analysis of this category as a social and cultural construction that varies throughout the history and refers to psychological and cultural features that a society confers to every element of what is considered masculine and feminine.

Gender is a relational, hierarchical, historical and concrete category. It expresses the relationship between men and women regarding to society, the historical relations of power between them, their evolution and how they are seen in concrete and specific contexts.

Gender is also seen as a group of social, political, psychological, judicial and economical characteristics assigned to people in a differentiated way, according to the sex. Sometimes it is said that XXI will be a century that will put again man in a centre of the debate, but not only as it has been so far, but from the masculinity point of view. In this restatement everything is not advantageous in the cultural aspect.

The expropriation women have suffered historically has been more evident, culturally deprived from the right of social leadership, intelligence and sexual enjoyment. For men, to assume what has been assigned for them has also meant a group of expropriations that has been unnoticed in a conscious way, but from the psychological point of view it also has represented a burden.

They have been trained for the risk, the feat, the strength, the competence, the power. The right for a close and tender paternity, the enjoyment of a home has been affected. The limitation for expressing their feelings openly has been affected as well. Many of these features with the time and during the stereotyping process are transforming into a cost on their own health and on the other's one. It has been spoken about the masculine crisis of identity, precisely because men try to change due to the fact women are requesting a different man.

Where do men go in this century then? Gender should not be seen as a dichotomy between women and men. To change these social relationships based on the differences that distinguish the sexes and are used for designing psychological, social, and cultural aspects, entails the deconstruction of many patterns mentioned before and the construction of new ones.

These changes, of course, will not happen just due to new laws, which really can help to produce the change, but this will not be enough. Alternatives for the change should be promoted, not from sexual stereotypes, but from individual and personal potentialities of everyone.

The differentiated education according to the sexes is the first step in the reproduction of sexual stereotypes, a matter that many times is left behind the house

doors. The systems of demands for boys and girls should not be different in terms of responsibilities for both.

Together with the development of policies and programs aimed at striving against stereotypes and the political will from the government, it is necessary to develop a real cultural of equality.

This should be done through a socialized work, understood as a complex and detailed cultural process of incorporating forms of being represented as well as how to value and to behave in the world. This process not only happens in the childhood, but also during the whole live, that is why, different social networks play important roles according to the case, in order to promote the change, stop or prevent it in different life cycles.

The understanding of the gender equality should include aspects such as: the socio-historical changes, the process of socialization within the family, the economical production, power and authority, sexuality and emotions, and communication.

For the Federation of Cuban Women it is important to change and transcend these socio-cultural constructions that separate men and women, and try to find everything that joins us and we could share as human beings. The efforts for achieving gender equality is at the same time a challenge for a country like ours that has set out every time higher levels of cultural development for people and the formation of human being values, like the equality of rights, opportunities and possibilities for women and men, among others.

The roles to be played by women and men in the families and in society that we are building, the ethic and moral values that guide our behaviours and attitudes, the concepts and ideas we defend, to go forward with our social project, come through a process of redefining gender roles - an essential aspect within the battle of ideas. Preparing women to assume their responsibilities in all spheres, including administrative and political management, and continue developing all abilities and human qualities in men, both for social work as well as in the exercise of a responsible and conscious paternity to have better fathers and mothers, better human beings, are some of the strategic objectives in our society.



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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further action and initiatives: (ii) women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building

Statement submitted by Federation of Cuban Women, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2004/1.



Peace should not be interpreted as a simple absence of military actions; it should be indissoluble related to the conditions of development in the countries. It is hard to achieve a total peace of a world in a profound crisis of human values, where 842 millions of people are hungry and this figure tends to be increased in five millions every year.

To assure peace to the peoples implies the right to a life with dignity, and this should be an indispensable condition and a premise for the solution of all problems, including the definitive liberalization from the exploitation and the oppression in all its forms.

According to the present conditions, a policy with double standard is observed. What is advised to the South or to the Third World countries, it is not what is applied in the North, where the big powers are. The new economical policies have tried to lead peoples to the conviction that globalize and neo-liberal capitalism is the best alternative and the only option to survive.

These policies have stressed the contemporary global problems that include the destruction of the environment; pandemic and endemic diseases; the concentration of wealth in few hands and the multiplication of the misery for many people; migrations and conflicts; addiction and trafficking of drugs; corruption and the organized crime. The present world order cannot be the alternative for the peoples, or for their development. That is why it is necessary to continue striving for peace with justice for all human beings.

As it is stated in a UN document, 1980, related to the women's decade: "Without peace and stability, the development is not possible. In the other hand, peace will not be durable without the elimination of inequalities and the discrimination at all levels. Peace is the right to the equality of participation in friendly relationships and cooperation in all spheres of life, the full respect to the dignity of peoples, and their rights to their self-determination and independence without interferences and foreign interventions and to the promotion of the guarantees and the fundamental human rights.

The Federation of Cuban Women reaffirms that peace is inseparable from the development and from the equality between women and men. At the same time, it considers that we live in a period of time where wars - even many of them under the disguise of the "humanitarian missions", "peace-keeping operations" and "alleged war against the terrorism"- threaten us everywhere, the production and trade of weapons- more sophisticated every time - continues increasing.

Many of the economic and social problems that worry the majority of human beings in the world, could be alleviated if the resources devoted to military expenses, would be used in the progress and well being of the peoples. A real and universal peace not only implies the absence of wars, but it is also necessary to struggle for eliminating the objective reasons that cause them.

It does not deal with the achievements of an equal participation and management of men and women in conflicts or in humanitarian missions, it is a matter of fighting together for the peace, sovereignty and independence, through solidarity actions as an act of a permanent defence of our families and peoples.

The Cuban people and its women talk about these values, not only with consciousness, but also from the awareness of have been victims of a terrorist policy towards our country for more than 40 years from the world biggest power, where six of every ten Cubans have been born under difficult conditions of an economic, commercial and finance blockade from the U.S. The overwhelming majority of the countries in the U.N. General Assembly has condemned this genocide blockade for 12 years.

Cuban women support determinedly the need for developing a permanent solidarity among women and men formulated through actions where women's potentialities become protagonists of the construction of a world with more equity and social justice to which women and men aspire, and we know it is possible.



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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further action and initiatives: women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building

Statement submitted by Colombian Commission of Jurists, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2004/1.



Participation of women in peace-building in Colombia

Overview: situation of human rights and humanitarian law

The human rights and humanitarian law situation in Colombia continued to deteriorate during 2003. The present Government's policy of "democratic security" disregards international human rights law and humanitarian law, and amounts to no more than a limited and arbitrary concept of security. It aims completely to erode the distinction between society and the State by, denying the right to opposition and social dissent and increasing persecution of the political opposition. As a result, leaders of dissident political groups have been detained without justification.

The Colombian Government's actions, which are set in the framework of what has been termed the "war on terror", violate human rights and contravene General Assembly resolution 57/219 of 18 December 2002, which provides that States must ensure that any measures taken to combat terrorism are in keeping with their international obligations. This is the case of the statute that grants judicial powers to the military forces, allowing them to carry out raids, intercept telephone calls and make arrests without any prior judicial order. This is a serious violation of the rights to personal freedom and to privacy, among others.

In the case of the guerrilla groups, the Government seeks a solution through military force rather than political negotiation, and has opted to reach a peace agreement with the paramilitaries. To this end, it has promoted, among other measures, an alternative penalties bill, which would guarantee the paramilitary groups impunity for crimes against humanity and war crimes, while disregarding the principles of truth, justice and compensation for victims.

Other legislative initiatives put forward by the Government pursuant to its policy of democratic security contravene the constitutional provisions of a social State under the rule of law and, paradoxically, endanger the security of the Colombian people. The national security bill, which establishes new modalities for involving civil society in national security and defence, and the proposal to limit *amparo proceedings* and the powers of the Constitutional Court, to eliminate its power to review a state of emergency and to restrict autonomy in the administration of the judiciary, seriously affect autonomy and independence.

The effects of these reforms on civil life impact differently on women. Not only do they seriously violate their rights, but in placing new burdens on them they also represent an obstacle to women's participation at all levels of the State and society. For example, the compulsory military service bill is especially serious for women because it will allow them to be called up "when the country's circumstances so require it and when the national Government deems it necessary", which in the current circumstances means that the service would change from being voluntary to being obligatory. Women's and human rights organizations have expressed their opposition to this bill.

In addition to the critical situation of women's lives in terms of economic, social and cultural rights, the gender-motivated discrimination that many of them suffer and the severe consequences of the armed conflict in the country, it is necessary to take into account the Government's actions, aimed at involving them in the war. These actions explicitly contradict the many specific recommendations made to the State by various international organizations, to the effect that it should

take positive measures to eradicate violence against women, to ensure their participation and to minimize the impact of the armed conflict on their rights.

In this regard, Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) makes a special appeal to parties to armed conflict to respect fully the rights of women and girls, to guarantee their special protection and to take measures to protect them from gender-based violence, in particular.

Challenges and obstacles to the participation of women in peace-building

At present, women face violence, discrimination, poverty and exclusion, and this reflects an alarming step backwards in the little progress made. Women are harder and more cruelly hit by war than men, as they are the main victims of forced displacement, sexual violence and, increasingly, forced recruitment by armed groups. In this context it is clear that the search for peace in Colombia presents serious obstacles, especially for women.

Firstly, threats and attacks on the right to life by the various combatants force women to move, for the most part, away from the rural areas, where they are conducting productive projects that empower other women and strengthen society, which causes a disruption of organizational processes. An illustration of this situation is the case of the Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas e Indígenas de Colombia (ANMUCIC). The organization has had to suspend its work in some departments, as several association members have been victims of serious violations of their human rights, which places the organization in imminent danger of disappearing. The national president recently had to leave the country due to threats made against her and her family.

Another obstacle is that violations of women's rights go unpunished. In most cases, sexual violence never comes to light because the authorities do not investigate events. In the case of El Salado (Bolívar), for example, where paramilitary groups carried out a massacre from 16 to 19 February 2000, women were victims of barbaric acts of sexual abuse and were then murdered. The acts of the perpetrators of the massacre remain unpunished today.

Thirdly, the ideas and considerations of women's groups have not as yet been taken into account in any of the peace processes. The women's movement in Colombia has said "no to war" and has grown nationwide into a different alternative for overcoming the armed conflict. Several peace initiatives have gained momentum and clearly show the role played by Colombian women in peace-building today.

Conclusion

The removal of human rights violations from the reality of life in Colombia must begin with a recognition, by the Government, the international community and society in general, of the gravity of the situation and its causes. The Government must be called on to clarify events. The truth about the magnitude and severity of human rights violations must be established through investigation and prosecution by judicial authorities of the State. Democracy must be built on the foundations of justice.

Any talks undertaken with the guerrillas and paramilitary groups must respect the victims' rights to truth, justice and compensation, especially in cases of serious violations of women's human rights.

The inclusion of a gender perspective in the State's policies and the establishment of conditions to allow for women's participation in peace initiatives and decisions of national interest are vital to ensure that women's opinions, needs and proposals are taken into account by the State when taking action to deal with the armed conflict and to carry out a peace process with the armed elements.

It is very important that the State undertake initiatives and programmes to guarantee the security of social and human rights leaders in the country, and that it take action aimed at improving the living conditions of women and their families, in terms of economic, social and cultural rights. Until these conditions are set in place, it will be very difficult to speak of overcoming the armed conflict and of working together to build a genuine peace.





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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further action and initiatives

Statement submitted by the International Alliance of Women, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and the International Federation of Women Lawyers, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2004/1.



The members of our organizations are dedicated to the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They are committed to building a more peaceful, just and free world. We, therefore, recognize the utmost importance of women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict building. We also recognize that building a lasting peace has become as important as ending conflicts. After armed conflict, the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the whole of civil society must be addressed to form a stable and law-abiding society.

The international community and particularly the United Nations have increasingly come to recognize the contribution women have to make in forming this stable society. Indeed, they recognize women have a vital role to play in the development and well being of their country at every level. The U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 is in itself a significant contribution to the expanded awareness of the international community of the importance of this reality. In underlining the importance of the need for women's voices to be heard at decision-making levels, the Security Council has once again validated the importance of allowing women to exercise their rights and responsibilities as adults and citizens of their countries. As such, women should be called to be at the peace table in the aftermath of conflicts and at the decision-making level in the reconstruction process. As women's rights are increasingly recognized, so also are their responsibilities.

A heartening example of the success of women's role in this process, which we have before us today, is the adoption of the Constitution of Afghanistan on the 4th of January, 2004. FIDA and IAW fully endorse the statement of Ms. Ferida Acar, the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) when she said: "there was a special call to celebrate in that the newly approved Constitution explicitly guarantees equal rights and duties before the law. Gender equality is a crucial factor not only in achieving sustainable peace but also in increasing respect for human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in all societies. Enshrining the principle of gender equality within the Constitution is a vital starting point for the transformation and reconstruction of Afghanistan. It legitimizes the important role played by women and girls in Afghanistan in reshaping their future and in rebuilding their country." In 2004 post conflict peace building in Afghanistan, there is now a base to work from with a Constitution which as law gives all its citizens a better opportunity to participate more fully in the life of their country.

Indeed, to restate a matter of principle FIDA and IAW are committed to the principle of equality, i.e. the equal participation (as equal partners) of men and women in the development of their society. The participation of men and boys in achieving this more just society has paramount importance for our organizations. On the simplest level our members have been

(and are now) fortunate in having the personal support of husbands, brothers, fathers and men who have partnered and supported us in our efforts. They have often also served as role models and mentors, being themselves involved in progressive movements. Countless stories about these farsighted, understanding men would fill volumes in the annals of every affiliate. On a more public level the work of FIDA and IAW has focused on a multi-faceted educational program – from those directed to elementary school on gender stereotyping to workshops and seminars on violence against women. Another major focus of our work has been to gain support for the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. These efforts have given our members the opportunity to work with like-minded men again.

We take heart from these contacts while fully realizing that the cultural practices, which discriminate against women, are deeply embedded in our societies and are not easily overcome. The support of men and boys today in achieving gender equality is not only greatly appreciated, it is essential for the success of the struggle to reach a more just and fair society.
